

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1-AWASHINGTON TIMES
7 April 1986

Casey sees Syria, Libya as proxies in Soviets' plan

By Bill Gertz
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

CIA Director William Casey yesterday charged the Soviet Union with using Libya and Syria in the Middle East as part of a global plan to control vital oilfields and shipping lanes.

In a rare public speech, the CIA director called for a three-pronged strategy of regional strategic alliances, diplomacy and economic development to counter Soviet influence in the Middle East.

"Today the Soviet investment in Syria and Libya is at an all-time high with some 6,000 Soviet bloc military advisers and a massive arsenal of planes, tanks and rockets in these two countries," Mr. Casey said in a speech before some 1,500 members of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a pro-Israel defense lobby.

The greatest hedge against Soviet influence in the Middle East, he said, is the peace process aimed at resolving Arab-Israeli differences.

"The invigoration of the peace process is, in my view, of overriding geopolitical importance in order to deny the Soviets a lever for entry into the Middle East," Mr. Casey said.

But he warned that the prospect of successful U.S.-backed peace negotiations may prompt the Soviets to back an "aggressive Syrian military posture toward Israel" and radical factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization in order to derail the peace talks.

Since becoming the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev has directed Soviet attempts to solidify a global network of Soviet "bridgeheads" from Nicaragua to the former U.S. Navy base at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, Mr. Casey said.

The Soviets' "creeping imperialism," he said, is aimed at threatening Middle East oilfields and the isthmus between North and South America.

"Afghanistan, South Yemen, Ethiopia, as well as Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam, Mozambique and Angola in Southern Africa bring Soviet power much closer to the sources of oil and minerals on which the industrial nations depend and put Soviet

naval and air power astride the sea lanes which carry those resources to America, Europe and Japan," Mr. Casey said.

In Central America, the Soviets have been using bases in Cuba and Nicaragua to export subversion, Mr.

Casey said, with a long-term goal of threatening the Panama Canal and Mexico.

While Soviet influence in the Middle East until recently has been used "subtly," Mr. Casey said Syria and Libya have used terrorism as a low-cost, low-risk method of attacking governments in Europe, the Middle East and Latin America.

"Terrorism today is an integral part of the foreign policy and defense apparatus of these states," Mr. Casey said.

Libya, with a population of 3 million people, has extended Soviet influence throughout Africa, he said. Syria is attempting to "complete its domination of Lebanon" and is introducing advanced Soviet weapons aimed at Israel, he said.

States that have been targeted by terrorists have succeeded in establishing a global "counterterrorist network" involving joint training and intelligence-sharing, he said.

The Soviets' conventional and nuclear forces, he said, "may be only a shield to make it easier and less risky to intimidate and subvert weaker governments and to gobble up pieces of territory around the globe."

Mr. Casey said Soviet bridgeheads in Cuba, Vietnam, South Yemen and Ethiopia, Angola, Nicaragua, Cambodia and Afghanistan have been used to support anti-Western forces in a global network of low-intensity warfare and terrorism.

"These bridgeheads are being linked in a growing logistical and support network supported by ex-

panding Soviet naval and air power," Mr. Casey said. "It is the Mediterranean segment of this Soviet global network which here concerns us most, [and] it's anchored in Libya and Syria."

All the Soviet bridgeheads, he noted, have been set up near vital "chokepoints" in sea lanes and in militarily tense or conflict-ridden regions.

The recent civil war in South Yemen had been part of a Soviet effort to enforce the so-called "Brezhnev Doctrine" of preventing pro-Soviet states from tilting toward the West, he said.

"The government there had begun to open up to the West," he said. "Hard-line, pro-Soviet exiles returned from Moscow and initiated a coup against the South Yemen president."

The coup led to a civil war that continued until "planes flown by Soviet pilots began pounding government forces and Soviet weapons were flown into the country," he said.

In an earlier speech, Israel's ambassador to the United States, Meir Rosenne, told the gathering that the West requires political wisdom and moral will to combat international terrorism.

Mr. Rosenne called for using legal measures to fight terrorism, closing offices of the Palestine Liberation Organization around the world, curbing landing rights of planes from states that support terrorism, imposing sanctions against state sponsors of terrorism and greater intelligence-sharing by states targeted by terrorists.